



JACK THE GIANT KILLER.

MANY years ago, in the wonderful time when King Arthur ruled over England, there lived in Cornwall a number of giants who never did any work, but stole the sheep and cattle from the people in the country round. Some of them even ate little boys and girls when they wanted a specially good supper.

These giants were so tall that the sea only came up to their knees. And when the peasants saw them wading through it they were terribly frightened, and they fled into the woods and hid.

However, in one of the villages lived a little boy called Jack. He was a very brave little boy, and when he was seven years old he said: "Why is everyone so afraid of the giants? I will kill them, and then no one will be afraid any more."

Close by there was a huge castle, which belonged to a giant called Cormoran. He was eighteen feet high, and when he was very hungry he would walk down into the village, pick up a man in each hand, and carry them off to broil for his breakfast.

Now Jack determined to put a stop to this, so one night he set out for the castle with a spade, a horn, and a pole-axe. With the spade he dug a trench twenty feet long, and twenty feet wide, and twenty feet deep. Then he covered it all over with sticks, and strewed the sticks with earth, so that it looked just the same as before. When he had quite finished, the dawn was breaking in faint golden hues across the sky, and then he blew a terrific blast on his horn.

Out of the Castle walked the huge giant on to the green sward. "Who has dared to wake me?" he roared in a voice of thunder. "You shall be broiled for my breakfast."

"You had better catch me first," retorted Jack, who passed for a wit in the village.

"You young rascal!" And with this the giant advanced with great strides to catch him, but Jack only danced with glee and blew his horn again and again. In another moment the giant had fallen into the trench and was howling with rage and pain.

"How about your breakfast now?" asked Jack, and he struck the giant a heavy blow on his head with the pole-axe and killed him. Then he cut off his head and brought it home to the village, and the peasants were so pleased to see Cormoran dead that they clubbed together and bought Jack a sword, on which was written in golden letters:—

"This is the valiant Englishman
Who slew the giant Cormoran."

And after that they gave him the name of "JACK THE GIANT KILLER," and so he is always called.

Several years passed away, but Jack was always thinking of giants, and always longing to kill another. At last he made up his mind to travel into Wales, and to go to King Arthur's Court. So he set out, and walked on and on down the high road until he grew very hungry and very tired, and he found that night was



coming on. And now in the distance he saw another great castle standing on a hill, and he thought that he would go there and ask for shelter. So he climbed up the hill and knocked at the door of the castle. It was opened by a Giant with two heads. Jack was rather frightened, but the giant was very hospitable, and asked him to pass the night with him. He did not seem blood-thirsty and ferocious like the other giants whom Jack had seen, but the fact was that he was a Welsh giant, so he was very malicious and cunning. However, he gave Jack a good supper, and then took him up into a pretty bedroom, with a nice little

white bed in it, and wished him a good night. But as he was leaving the room Jack heard him muttering to himself:—

“Altho’ you lodge with me this night,
You shall not see the morning light;
My club shall dash your brains out quite.”

But Jack had put a great billet of wood in the bed, and then he crept into a corner and hid himself. At midnight the giant came into the room very quietly, felt cautiously about till he found the bed, hit three tremendous blows with his club, and left the room chuckling to himself.

He was somewhat startled when Jack appeared at breakfast the next morning, but he asked in a friendly voice: “Well, how did you sleep, my lad?” “Oh, very well,” answered Jack, “only a rat gave me two or three blows with his tail.” Then he began to put the hasty pudding that the giant had given him to eat into a leathern wallet inside his coat, pretending all the time to swallow it. When they had both finished their breakfast, Jack said to the giant: “I can do a great many things; I can cut my head off and put it on again; and see here what I can do.” With this he took a knife and ripped up the wallet, so that the hasty pudding all fell out. “Odds, splutter!” said the giant, furious at being outdone, “hur can do that hurself.” And he snatched the knife from Jack and ripped open his own stomach so that he died.

Then Jack went on his way to the Court of King Arthur, and was enrolled as one of the Knights of the Round Table, and that was a wonderful thing to be. Little Jack was a great favourite, and used to go on many expeditions with the King’s son. One day the Prince told him that he was very unhappy, for there was a beautiful Princess whom he wanted to marry, but the Princess was in the hands of an enchanter, and no one could find out how to free her. “Well,” said Jack, “I will do that; let us go together and find the enchanter.” So they started off together one

day as if they were going for a walk, and after they had walked a very long way, they found themselves in a wood, and the Prince said: "I am so tired that I can walk no further; let us find shelter for the night."

Jack persuaded the Prince to rest in the wood while he went and looked for a house. When he had walked about five minutes longer he found himself outside the wood, and at the walls of a great castle. Jack knocked at the gate, and out came a giant with three heads.

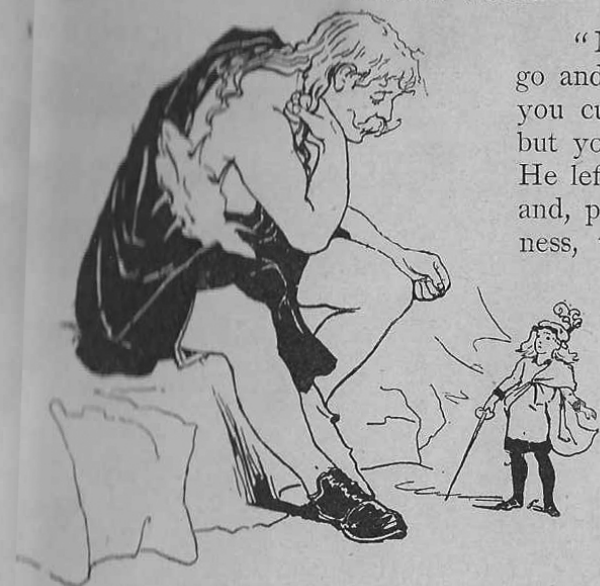
"I am your cousin Jack, come with news," said Jack.

"What news, what news, cousin Jack?"

"Very bad news; the King's son is coming with three thousand men to kill you."

"Oh dear! oh dear! cousin Jack, I do not want to be killed," moaned the giant. "Lock me up in the cellar, and keep the key yourself until they are gone."

So Jack took the key and locked the giant up. Then he went back to the Prince and brought him to the castle, and they passed a merry evening together. In the morning Jack collected as much treasure as the Prince could carry, and sent him on into the wood with it, while he let the giant out from the cellar. The giant thanked him much for his kindness. "And now," he said, "I will give you something that will be useful to you." And he brought out of his garret an old coat, an old hat, an old pair of shoes, and a rusty sword. "Take these," he said, "the coat will make you invisible, the hat will make you so wise that you will know everything, the shoes will make you swift as the wind, and with the sword you will be able to cut through anything." So Jack took them all and joined the Prince, and they journeyed on together. Soon they came to another castle, where lived a very cruel giant. Round the castle was a wide, deep moat, and across the moat was a drawbridge.



"Now," said Jack, "I will go and speak to the giant while you cut the drawbridge through, but you must be quick about it." He left the King's son to do this, and, putting on his coat of darkness, walked into the courtyard of the castle, where he found the giant sitting down with his club in his hand.

"Fe, fi, fo, fum,
I smell the blood
of an Englishman;
Be he alive, or be he dead,
I'll grind his bones
to make my bread,"

he called out suddenly, for he could smell Jack, though he could not see him.

"Well, well," said Jack, who had on his shoes of swiftness, "you may catch me if you like." And with that he threw off his coat and set off running. Round and round the courtyard he ran with the giant after him, till he saw that the drawbridge was cut through all but one inch. Across the drawbridge darted Jack, and after him lumbered the giant, but his weight was so great that when he got on to the drawbridge, crash it went, and the giant fell into the moat and was drowned.

Then Jack and the King's son continued their journey till at last they arrived at the abode of the enchanter Galligantua.

Now the door was guarded by two ferocious griffins, and if anyone could pass these griffins, he would be able to read the enchantment inside,

Jack put on his coat of darkness and marched through the door without the least fear, for of course the griffins could not see him; and when he got inside he saw an enormous horn hanging up in the hall, and under the horn these words were written in scarlet letters :

“Whoever can this trumpet blow,
Shall cause the giant’s overthrow.”

“That will I do,” said Jack, and, seizing the horn, he blew a tremendous blast that made the castle walls shake. The griffins fell down dead, and then helter-skelter, through the great hall, rushed a group of terrified animals—lions, bears, tigers, cats—every kind of creature. All were Princes and Princesses who had been changed into animals by the enchanter Galligantua, who never allowed them to escape beyond the castle walls.

Last of all came a beautiful gazelle and a young deer. When these two saw Jack, they fawned on him, and followed him through room after room, till he came to a small study. Here he found the enchanter biting his nails with terror, for he knew that all was over with him. Jack cut off his head with his sharp sword, and as he did so, the deer and the gazelle turned into two beautiful sisters; and all the other animals at once took their proper shape.

The young Prince, who had followed Jack, immediately knew his Princess, who had been changed into a gazelle. They were soon married, with great rejoicings, and they went back to live in the Prince’s own palace. But Jack married the sister of the Princess, and they lived happy ever after in the castle of the enchanter.